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# Blessed be drudgery and A cup of cold water

William Channing  
Gannett















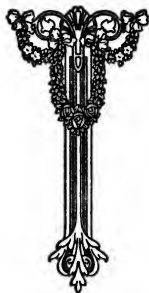


**BLESSED BE DRUDGERY**  
**AND**  
**A CUP OF COLD WATER**

**“ Drudgery is the gray angel  
of success ”**

# Blessed Be Drudgery AND A Cup of Cold Water

*By*  
WILLIAM C. GANNETT



1914  
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**" An arm of aid to the weak,  
A friendly hand to the friendless,  
Kind words so short to speak  
But whose echo is endless,—  
The world is wide, these things are small,  
They may be nothing — but they are all! "**

**To all who serve**



**BLESSED BE DRUDGERY**



## FOREWORD

SEVERAL years ago, while waiting to be served in the Methodist Book Store in Sydney, Australia, my eye fell upon a charming little book with the unique title "Blessed Be Drudgery." It proved to be a series of papers by William C. Gannett, published by David Bryce & Son, Glasgow, Scotland. Frequent reference to this little book in talks with students and colporteurs has created a general demand from fellow workers that two of the most interesting of these papers, "Blessed Be Drudgery" and "A Cup of Cold Water," be published for general distribution. We therefore take pleasure in sending out this booklet, trusting that it will impress upon all who read it the beautiful lesson that "heart-culture" is one of the rewards to all who give their lives unselfishly in service.

E. R. PALMER.

## BLESSED BE DRUDGERY

### I

**O**F every two men probably one man thinks he is a drudge, and every second woman at times is *sure* she is. Either we are not doing the thing we should like to do in life; or, in what we do and like, we find so much to dislike that the rut tires, even when the road runs on the whole a pleasant way. I am going to speak of the *culture that comes through this very drudgery*.

"Culture through my drudgery!" some one is now thinking. "This treadmill that has worn me out, this grind I hate, this plod that, as long ago as I remember it, seemed tiresome,—to this have I owed culture? Keeping house or keeping accounts, tending babies, teaching primary school, weighing sugar and salt at a counter, those blue overalls in the machine-shop,—have these anything to do with culture? Culture takes leisure, elegance, wide margins of time, a pocketbook; drudgery means limitations, coarseness, crowded hours, chronic worry, old clothes, black hands, headaches. Culture implies college; life allows a daily paper, a monthly magazine, the circulating library, and two gift-books at Christmas. Our real and

our ideal are not twins: never were! I want the books — but the clothes-basket wants me. The two children are good — and so would be two hours a day without the children. I crave an outdoor life — and walk down-town of mornings to perch on a high stool till supper-time. I love nature — and figures are my fate. My taste is books — and I farm it. My taste is art — and I correct exercises. My taste is science — and I measure tape. I am young and like stir — the business jogs on like a stage-coach. Or I am *not* young, I am getting gray over my ears, and like to sit down and be still — but the drive of the business keeps both tired arms stretched out full length. I hate this over-bidding and this underselling, this spry, unceasing competition, and should willingly give up a quarter of my profits to have two hours of my daylight to myself — at least I should if, working just as I do, I did not barely get the children bread and clothes. I did not choose my calling, but was dropped into it — by my innocent conceit — or by duty to the family — or by a parent's foolish pride — or by our hasty marriage; or a mere accident wedged me into it. Would I could have my life over again! Then, whatever I *should* be, at least I would *not* be what I am today! "

Have I spoken truly for any one here? I know I have. Goes not the grumble thus within the silent breast of many a person whose pluck

never lets it escape to words like these, save now and then a tired evening to husband or to wife?

There is often truth and justice in the grumble,— truth and justice, both. Still, when the question rises through the grumble, Can it be that this drudgery, not to be escaped, gives culture? the true answer is, Yes, and culture of the prime elements of life, of the very fundamentals of all fine manhood and fine womanhood.

Our *prime* elements are due to our drudgery, — I mean that literally,— the *fundamentals* that underlie all fineness, and without which no other culture worth the winning is even possible. These, for instance: (and what names are more familiar?) power of attention, power of industry, promptitude in beginning work, method and accuracy and despatch in doing work, perseverance, courage before difficulties, cheer under straining burdens, self-control and self-denial and temperance. These are the prime qualities; these are the fundamentals. We have heard these names before. When we were small, mother had a way of harping on them, and father joined in emphatically, and the minister used to refer to them in church. And this was what our first employer meant; only his way of putting the matter was, "Look sharp, my boy!" "Be on time, John!" "Stick to it!" Yes, that is just what they all

meant: these *are* the very qualities which the mothers tried to tuck into us when they tucked us into bed, the very qualities which the ministers pack into their platitudes, and which the nations pack into their proverbs. And that goes to *show* that they are the fundamentals. Reading, writing, and arithmetic are very handy, but these fundamentals of a man are handier to have; worth more; worth more than Latin and Greek and French and German and music and art-history and painting and wax flowers and travels in Europe, added together. These last are the decorations of a man or woman: even reading and writing are but conveniences; those other things are the *indispensables*. They make one's sit-fast strength, and one's active momentum, whatsoever and wheresoever the lot in life be,—be it wealth or poverty, city or country, library or workshop. Those qualities make the solid substance of oneself.

And the question I would ask of myself and you is, How do we get them? How do they become ours? High school and college can give much, but these are never on their programs. All the book-processes that we go to the schools for, and commonly call "our education," give no more than *opportunity* to win these indispensables of education. How, then, do we get them? We get them somewhat as the fields and valleys get their grace. Whence is it that the lines of river and meadow

and hill and lake and shore conspire today to make the landscape beautiful? — Only by long chiselings and steady pressures, by scour of floods, by centuries of storm and sun. These rounded the hills, and scooped the valley-curves, and mellowed the soil for meadow-grace. There was little grace in the operation, had we been there to watch. It was drudgery all over the land. Mother Nature was down on her knees doing her early scrubbing work! That was yesterday: today, result of scrubbing work, we have the laughing landscape.

Now what is true of the earth is true of each man and woman on the earth. Father and mother and the ancestors before them have done much to bequeath those elemental qualities to us; but that which scrubs them into us, the clinch which makes them actually ours, and keeps them ours, and adds to them as the years go by,—that depends on our own plod, our plod in the rut, our drill of habit; in one word, depends upon our drudgery. It is because we have to go, and *go*, morning after morning, through rain, through shine, through toothache, headache, heartache, to the appointed spot, and do the appointed work; because, and only because, we have to stick to that work through the eight or ten hours, long after rest would be so sweet; because the accounts on the ledger must square to a cent; because the goods must tally exactly with the invoice; because good

temper must be kept with children, customers, neighbors, not seven, but seventy times seven times; because the besetting sin must be watched today, tomorrow, and the next day; in short, without much matter *what* our work is, whether this or that, it is because, and only because, of the rut, plod, grind, humdrum in the work, that we at last get those self-foundations laid of which I spoke,—attention, promptness, accuracy, firmness, patience, self-denial, and the rest. When I think over that list and seriously ask myself three questions, I have to answer each with *No*: Are there any qualities in the list which I can afford to spare, to go without, as mere show-qualities? — Not one. Can I get these self-foundations laid, save by the weight, year in, year out, of the steady pressures? — No; there is no other way. Is there a single one in the list which I cannot get in some degree by undergoing the steady drills and pressures? — No; not one. Then beyond all books, beyond all class work at the school, beyond all special opportunities of what I call my education, it is this drill and pressure of my daily task that is my great schoolmaster. *My daily task*, whatever it be, *that is what mainly educates me*. All other culture is mere luxury compared with what that gives. That gives the indispensables. Yet, fool that I am, this pressure of my daily task is the very thing that I so growl at as my drudgery!

We can add right here this fact (and practically it is a very important fact to girls and boys as ambitious as they ought to be): the higher our ideals, the *more* we need those foundation habits strong. The street-cleaner can better afford to drink and laze than he who would make good shoes; and to make good shoes takes less force of character and brain than to make cures in the sick-room, or laws in the legislature, or children in the nursery. The man who makes the head of a pin or the split of a pen all day long, and the man who must put fresh thought into his work at every stroke,—which of the two more needs the self-control, the method, the accuracy, the power of attention and concentration? Do you sigh for books and leisure and wealth? It takes more concentration to use books—head tools—well than to use hand tools. It takes more self-control to use leisure well than work-days. Compare the Sundays and Mondays of your city; which day, all things considered, stands for the city's higher life,—the day on which so many men are lolling, or the day on which all toil? It takes more knowledge, more integrity, more justice, to handle riches well than to bear the healthy pinch of the just-enough.

Do you think that the great and famous escape drudgery? The native power and temperament, the outfit and capital at birth, count for much; but it convicts us common minds of



a huge mistake to hear the uniform testimony of the more successful geniuses about their genius. "Genius is patience," said who? — Sir Isaac Newton. "The prime minister's secret is patience," said who? — Mr. Pitt, the great prime minister of England. Who, think you, wrote, "My imagination would never have served me as it has, but for the habit of commonplace, humble, patient, daily, toiling, drudging attention"? It was Charles Dickens. Who said, "The secret of a Wall Street million is common honesty"? — Vanderbilt; and he added as the recipe for a million (I know somebody would like to learn it), "Never use what is not your own, never buy what you cannot pay for, never sell what you haven't got." How simple great men's rules are! How easy it is to be a great man! Order, diligence, patience, honesty,—just what you and I must use in order to put our dollar in the savings-bank, to do our schoolboy sum, to keep the farm thrifty, and the house clean, and the babies neat. Order, diligence, patience, honesty!

There is a wide difference between men, but truly it lies less in some special gift or opportunity granted to one and withheld from another than in the differing degree in which these common elements of human power are owned and used. Not how much talent have I, but how much will to use the talent that I have, is the main question; not how much do

I know, but how much do I do with what I know. To do their great work the great ones need more of the very same habits which the little ones need to do their smaller work. Goethe, Spencer, Agassiz, Jesus himself, share, not achievements, but conditions of achievement, with you and me. And those conditions for them, as for us, are largely the plod, the drill, the long disciplines of toil. If we ask such men their secret, they will uniformly tell us so.

Since we lay the firm substrata of ourselves in this way, then, and only in this way; and since the higher we aim, the more, and not the less, we need these firm substrata,—since this is so, I think we ought to make up our minds and our mouths to sing a halleluiah unto drudgery: *Blessed be drudgery*, the one thing that we cannot spare!

## II

But there is something else to be said. Among the people who are drudges, there are some who have given up their dreams of what, when younger, they used to talk or think about as their ideals, and have grown at last, if not content, resigned to do the actual work before them. Yes, here it is,—before us, and behind us, and on all sides of us; we cannot change it; we have accepted it. Still, we have not given up one dream,—the dream of *success* in this work to which we are so clamped. If we

cannot win the well-beloved one, then success with the ill-beloved,— this at least is left to hope for. Success may make *it* well-beloved, too,— who knows? Well, the secret of this success still lies in the same old word, drudgery. For drudgery is the doing of one thing, one thing, one thing, long after it ceases to be amusing; and it is this “one thing I do” that gathers me together from my chaos, that concentrates me from possibilities to powers, and turns powers into achievements. “One thing I do,” said Paul, and, apart from what his one thing was, in that phrase he gave the watchword of salvation. That whole long string of habits — attention, method, patience, self-control, and the others — can be rolled up and balled, as it were, in the word concentration. We shall halt a moment at the word: —

“I give you the end of a golden string:  
Only wind it into a ball,  
It will lead you in at heaven's gate  
Built in Jerusalem's wall.”

Men may be divided into two classes,— those who have a “one thing,” and those who have no “one thing,” to do; those with aim, and those without aim, in their lives; and practically it turns out that almost all of the success, and therefore the greater part of the happiness, go to the first class. The aim in life is what the backbone is in the body: without it we are invertebrate, belong to some lower order of being

not yet man. No wonder that the great question therefore with a young man is, What am I to be? and that the future looks rather gloomy until the life-path opens. The lot of many a girl, especially of many a girl with a rich father, is a tragedy of aimlessness. Social standards, and her lack of true ideals and of real education, have condemned her to be frittered; from twelve years old she is a cripple to be pitied, and by thirty she comes to know it. With the brothers the blame is more their own. The boys we used to play our school games with have found their places; they are winning homes and influence and money, their natures are growing strong and shapely, and their days are filling with the happy sense of accomplishment,—while *we* do not yet know what we are. We have no meaning on the earth. Lose us, and the earth has lost nothing; no niche is empty, no force has ceased to play, for we have no aim, and therefore we are still — nobody. *Get your meaning*, first of all! Ask the question until it is answered past question, What am I? What do I stand for? What name do I bear in the register of forces? In our national cemeteries there are rows on rows of unknown bodies of our soldiers,—men who did a work and put a meaning to their lives; for the mother and the townsmen say, “He died in the war.” But the men and women whose lives are aimless, reverse their fate. Our

*bodies* are known, and answer in this world to such or such a name,—but as to our inner selves, with real and awful meaning our walking bodies might be labeled, “An unknown man sleeps here!”

Now since it is concentration that prevents this tragedy of failure, and since this concentration always involves drudgery, long, hard, abundant, we have to own again, I think, that that is even more than what I called it first,—our chief schoolmaster; besides that, drudgery is the gray angel of success. The main secret of any success we may hope to rejoice in, is in that angel's keeping. Look at the leaders in the professions, the “solid” men in business, the master workmen who begin as poor boys and end by building a town in which to house their factory hands; they are drudges of the single aim. The man of science, and today more than ever, if he would add to the world's knowledge or even get a reputation, must be, in some one branch at least, a plodding specialist. The great inventors, Palissy at his pots, Goodyear at his rubber, Elias Howe at his sewing-machine, tell the secret,—“One thing I do.” The reformer's secret is the same. A one-eyed, grim-jawed folk the reformers are apt to be: one-eyed, grim-jawed, seeing but one thing, never letting go, they have to be to start a torpid nation. All these men as doers of the single thing drudge their way to their success.

Even so must we, would we win ours. The foot-loose man is *not* the enviable man. A wise man will be his own necessity and bind himself to a task, if by early wealth or foolish parents or other lowering circumstances he has lost the help of an outward necessity.

Dale Owen in his autobiography told the story of a foot-loose man, ruined by his happy circumstances. It was his father's friend, one born to princely fortune, educated with the best, married happily, with children growing up around him. All that health and wealth and leisure and taste could give were his. Robert Owen, an incessant worker, once went to spend a rare rest-moment with him at his country-seat, one of the great English parks. To the tired man, who had earned the peace, the quiet days seemed perfect, and at last he said to his host, "I have been thinking that, if I ever met a man who had nothing to desire, you must be he. Are you not completely happy?" The answer came: "Happy! Ah, Mr. Owen, I committed one fatal error in my youth, and dearly I have paid for it! I started in life without an object, almost without an ambition. I said to myself, 'I have all that I see others contending for; why should I struggle?' I knew not the curse that lights on those who have never to struggle for anything. I ought to have created for myself some definite pursuit, no matter what, so that there would be

something to labor for and to overcome. Then I might have been happy." Said Owen to him: "Come and spend a month with me at Braxfield. You have a larger share in the mills than any of us partners. Come and see for yourself what has been done for the work-people there and for their children; and give me your aid." "It is too late," was the reply; "the power is gone. Habits are become chains. *You* can work and do good; but for *me*,—in all the profitless years gone by I seek vainly for something to remember with pride, or even to dwell on with satisfaction. I have thrown away a life." And he had only one life in this world to lose.

Again then, I say, Let us sing a halleluiah and make a fresh beatitude: *Blessed be drudgery!* It is the one thing we cannot spare.

### III

This is a hard gospel, is it not? But now there is a pleasanter word to briefly say. To lay the firm foundations in ourselves, or even to win success in life, we *must* be drudges. But we *can* be *artists*, also, in our daily task. And at that word things brighten.

"Artists," I say — not artisans. "The difference?" This: the artist is he who strives to perfect his work; the artisan strives to get through it. The artist would fain finish, too; but with him it is to "finish the work God has

given me to do! " It is not how great a thing we do, but how well we do the thing we have to, that puts us in the noble brotherhood of artists. My real is not my ideal,— is that my complaint? One thing at least is in my power: if I cannot realize my ideal, I can at least *idealize my real*. How? — By trying to be perfect in it. If I am but a rain-drop in a shower, I will be at least a perfect drop; if but a leaf in a whole June, I will be at least a perfect leaf. This poor "one thing I do," instead of repining at its lowness or its hardness, I will make it glorious by my supreme loyalty to its demand.

An artist himself shall speak. It was Michelangelo who said, "Nothing makes the soul so pure, so religious, as the endeavor to create something perfect; for God is perfection, and whoever strives for it strives for something that is godlike. True painting is only an image of God's perfection, a shadow of the pencil with which he paints, a melody, a striving after harmony." The great masters in music, the great masters in all that we call artistry, would echo Michelangelo in this; he speaks the artist-essence out. But what holds good upon their grand scale and with those whose names are known, holds equally good of all pursuits and all lives. That true painting is an image of God's perfection must be true, if he says so; but no more true of paint-



ing than of shoemaking — of Michelangelo than of John Pounds the cobbler. I asked a cobbler once how long it took to become a good shoemaker; he answered promptly, "Six years, and then you must travel." That cobbler had the artist-soul. I told a friend the story, and he asked his cobbler the same question, "How long does it take to become a good shoemaker?"—"All your life, sir." That was still better,— a Michelangelo of shoes! Mr. Maydole, the hammer maker of central New York, was an artist. "Yes," said he to Mr. Paton, "I have made hammers here for twenty-eight years." "Well, then, you ought to be able to make a pretty good hammer by this time." "No, sir," was the answer, "I *never* made a pretty good hammer. I make the best hammer made in the United States." Daniel Morell, once president of the Cambridge Rail Works in Pittsburgh, which employed seven thousand men, was an artist, and trained artists. "What is the secret of such a development of business as this?" asked the visitor. "We have no secret," was the answer; "we always try to beat our last batch of rails. That's all the secret we have, and we don't care who knows it." The Paris bookbinder was an artist, who, when the rare volume of Corneille, discovered in a book-stall, was brought to him, and he was asked how long it would take him to bind it, answered, "O, sir,

you must give me a year at least! *this* needs all my care." Our Ben Franklin showed the artist when he began his own epitaph, "Benjamin Franklin, printer;" and Professor Agassiz, when he told the interviewer that he had "no time to make money;" and when he began his will, "I, Louis Agassiz, teacher."

In one of Murillo's pictures in the Louvre he shows us the interior of a kitchen; but doing the work there are, not mortals in old dresses, but beautiful white-winged angels. One serenely puts the kettle on the fire to boil, and one is lifting up a pail of water with heavenly grace, and one is at the kitchen dresser reaching up for plates; and I believe there is a little cherub running about and getting in the way, trying to help. What the old legend that it represented is, I do not know. But as the painter puts it to you on his canvas, all are so busy, and working with such a will, and so refining the work as they do it, that somehow you forget that pans are pans and pots pots, and think only of the angels, and how very natural and beautiful kitchen work is — just what the angels would do, of course.

It is the angel aim and standard in an act that consecrates it. He who aims for perfectness in a trifle is trying to do that trifle holily. The *trier* wears the halo, and therefore the halo grows as quickly round the brows of peasant as of king. This aspiration to do perfectly,—

is it not religion practicalized? If we use the name of God, is this not God's presence becoming actor in us? No need, then, of being "great" to share that aspiration and that presence. The smallest roadside pool has its water from heaven and its gleam from the sun, and can hold the stars in its bosom, as well as the great ocean. Even so the humblest man or woman can live splendidly. That is the royal truth that we need to believe, you and I who have no mission, and no great sphere to move in. The universe is not quite complete without *my* work well done. Have you ever read George Eliot's poem called "Stradivarius"? Stradivarius was the famous old violin maker, whose violins, nearly two centuries old, are almost worth their weight in gold today. Says Stradivarius in the poem, —

"If my hand slacked,  
I should rob God,—since he is fullest good,—  
Leaving a blank instead of violins.  
*He* could not make Antonio Stradivari's violins  
Without Antonio."

That is just as true of us as of our greatest brothers. What, stand with slackened hands and fallen heart before the littleness of your service! Too little is it to be perfect in it? Would you, then, if you were master, risk a greater treasure in the hands of such a man? O, there is no man, no woman, so small that they cannot make their life great by high en-

deavor! no sick, crippled child on its bed that cannot fill a niche of service *that* way in the world. This is the beginning of all gospels, that the kingdom of heaven is at hand just where we are. It is just as near us as our work is, for the gate of heaven for each soul lies in the endeavor to do that work perfectly.

But to bend this talk back to the word with which we started: will this striving for perfection in the little thing give culture? Have you ever watched such striving in operation? Have you never met humble men and women who read little, who knew little, yet who had a certain fascination as of fineness lurking about them? Know them, and you are likely to find them persons who have put so much thought and honesty and conscientious trying into their common work,— it may be sweeping rooms, or planing boards, or painting walls,— have put their ideals so long, so constantly, so lovingly, into that common work of theirs, that finally these qualities have come to permeate not their work only, but so much of their being that they are fine-fibered within, even if on the outside the rough bark clings. Without being schooled, they are apt instinctively to detect a sham — one test of culture. Without haunting the drawing-rooms, they are likely to have manners of quaint grace and graciousness — another test of culture. Without the singing lessons, their tones are apt to be gentle — another test

of culture. Without knowing anything about art, so called, they know and love the best in *one* thing — are artists in their own little specialty of work. They make good company, these men and women. Why? — Because, not having been able to realize their ideal, they have idealized their real, and thus in the depths of their nature have won true culture.

You know all beatitudes are based on something hard to do or to be. "Blessed are the meek;" is it easy to be meek? "Blessed are the pure in spirit;" is that so very easy? "Blessed are they that mourn." "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst [who *starve*] after righteousness." So this new beatitude by its hardness only falls into line with all the rest. A third time, and heartily, I say it: *Blessed be drudgery!* For thrice it blesses us: it gives us the fundamental qualities of manhood and womanhood; it gives us success in the thing we have to do; and it makes us, if we choose, artists,— artists within, whatever our outward work may be. *Blessed be drudgery*, the secret of all culture!

## A CUP OF COLD WATER

1000

1000

1000

## A CUP OF COLD WATER

**W**HOSOEVER shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only . . . shall in no wise lose his reward," said Jesus. There could not well be a simpler act, a smaller service, than that; not one you would sooner do for those whom you do not like, or sooner ask from those who do not like you.

Many a time, as Jesus walked the roads of Galilee, he must have stopped at the door of a stone hut, or rested by a village spring, and asked for a drink of water, just as we do in our country tramps. And some mother turned at the words, caught the look in the earnest eyes, and set down her child to bring the cup; or some man, hailed at his plow across the field, pointed to the kid-skin bottle under the bush and told the stranger to help himself. No one would deny it. Bread may be doubtful, but bubbling fountains, pouring rivers, shining lakes, are cups so plentiful that few ever add to the prayer for bread, "Give us this day our daily water." So this Teacher chose a cup of cold water as his emblem of small service, when he wanted to say that not the



slightest deed that is meant for good is lost and goes uncounted. The deed is appraised by its aim. He who offers the cup to the disciple as disciple offers it to the Teacher, and he who offers it to the Teacher as Teacher offers it to Him who sends the Teacher; and God takes notice, and the giver shall in no wise lose reward.

So said Jesus; and he spoke the thought again in his judgment parable. Thrown out of concrete into broad impersonal phrase, the thought is that the smallest kindness to the humblest creature belongs to the great economy that we call Providence; that then and there the laws of moral cause and effect begin to act, so that some way or other full recompense for that small deed is sure.

It is a mighty faith! It is one of the words that show how deep-natured Jesus was, how keen his spiritual insight. Not a sparrow falls without the Father, not a hair eludes his census, not a drink of water is forgotten. You and I echo the words; can you and I echo the faith? But not of the faith, nor of the law of recompense that holds good of a drink of water, will we think just now, only of the cup-offerings themselves, that is, of little acts of thoughtfulness for one another.

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that two thirds of all that makes it "beautiful to be alive" consists in cup-offerings of water. Not

an hour of life's journey but is rendered easier by their freshening or harder by their absence. Why? — Because most of us are burden-bearers of one sort or another; because to most of us a large part of the journey is a dull and trivial trudge; because there is much dust upon the road, and — not so many bad places as probably we think, yet many commonplaces: and it is load and dust and stretches of the commonplace that make one thirsty. If the feeling on our shoulders were of wings instead of load; if on Mondays, "in some good cause not our own," we were marching singing to a battle, and on Saturdays were coming back victorious, then the greetings on the way would make less difference to us. But as it is, we crave the roadside recognitions which give praise for the good deed attempted, pity for the hard luck and the fall, a hand-lift now and then to ease the burden's chafe, and now and then a word of sympathy in the step-step-stepping that takes us through the dust. And this is all that most of us can wait to give, for we, too, are here on business.

You cannot step my journey for me, cannot carry me on your back, cannot do me any great service; but it makes a world of difference to me whether I do my part in the world with or without these little helps which fellow travelers can exchange. "I am busy, Johnnie, and can't help it," said the father, writing away, when

the little fellow hurt his finger. "Yes, you could — you might have said 'O!' " sobbed Johnnie. There's a Johnnie in tears inside of all of us upon occasions. The old Quaker was right: "I expect to pass through this life but once. If there is any kindness or any good thing I can do to my fellow beings, let me do it now. I shall pass this way but once."

"An arm of aid to the weak,  
A friendly hand to the friendless,  
Kind words so short to speak  
But whose echo is endless,—  
The world is wide, these are small,  
They may be nothing — but *they are all!*"

"A cup of cold water only." One must not forget, when handing it, that the cup is one thing, the water quite another. Tin dipper or silver goblet is all one, provided we are thirsty and the water is good. So the cup I speak of need be no shining deed of service, need be no deed at all; it is far oftener only a word, or the tone in a word, or the smile with a word. That word or tone or smile is the cup; what is the *water*? — Your heart's sympathy. The fact that you are thinking a kind thought of me — you of me — is the refreshment. That is what sends me on the road with the coolness felt along the veins. Of course, then, face and manner, more than hands, reach out the cup to me. The brusque manner of one friend — his tin cup — may be many times more welcome

than the smooth manner — silver-plated goblet — of another; it holds purer sympathy. The nod, with a gleam in the eyes and a wrinkle around them, may mean a deal more of heart's greeting than another's lifted hat. A "Good morning!" may be tendered so respectfully,— and you drop it at the next step as you drop a boy's handbill on the street, hardly conscious you have held it,— or it may come tossed to you, but with something in the face behind the toss that really makes the next few moments of the morning good. I can do you a great favor in such a way that you will half hate me and my favor; you can accept from me a favor in such wise that I shall feel as if I had been crowned.

Therefore there are many fine cups passed about that hold no water at all, or very little, — cups really made for bric-a-brac, not service; empty goblets of fashion and etiquette; stage-tumblers which we actors hand about momentarily, but with no possibility of spilling.

Three common kinds of courtesy can make small claim to be "cups of cold water."

First and worst is the politeness deliberately adopted to serve self-interest; politeness by which we try to climb into people's esteem, intent upon their hen-roosts. In such courtesy it is of course we ourselves who drink the water, while going through all the motions of the good Samaritan.

Next and more innocent comes the conven-

tional hat-and-glove and call-and-card politeness, so much more common East than West, and in Europe than in America; whose absence, like a wrong accent, betrays the untrained American abroad. This is the realm of etiquette, and fashion queens it there. Many of the customs she imposes are harmless enough, though staling all the freshness of one's manners; but many are dwarf-lies which *taint* the manner, until at last no sympathy that we can offer has the natural sparkle of sincerity.

A third kind of courtesy, better far than this, but with little staying power to quench thirst, is the offhand geniality easy to those whose faces light up readily, whose hands go quickly out, whose voices have a hail-fellow-well-met ring for every one,—a geniality that carries little thoughtfulness, little delicacy, little reverence, and no self-sacrifice; the manner without the heart of sympathy. It is soon understood. Of this sort we see more in America than in England, more West than East.

And, in justice, let us say of this last kind that it is good as far as it goes. It is easy to slander the politeness of the surface. Even that second kind has use as a preventive force. It is like the one policeman in the village — only one, but he diffuses an immense protection! It watches between neighbors, arresting little invasions of one another's comfort, which, if not arrested, would so harass good fellow-

ship. Some one has well said, "Politeness is like an air-cushion; there's nothing in it, but it eases the joints wonderfully." So call this politeness of the surface good, only not good for much. It carries small guaranty that the cup of water will be offered to the *little ones*, and still less that it will be offered when one-self is thirsty.

But it is those "little ones" that give Jesus' saying its point. "Whosoever shall give . . . one of these *little ones* a cup," that takes the real sympathy, the real self-forgetting. And where three or four are gathered in any relation of life whatever, there is almost sure to be a "little one" with reference to the others, one not so bright as they, not so winsome, not so able to hold his own. When but two meet, one is apt to be a little one, the other a big one. And though to change the circumstances of the meeting is quite possibly to exchange the sizes, so that the little one becomes the big and the big one little, yet that still shows that two equals seldom meet. We can hardly talk together five minutes on any subject touching life without finding it full in our way to say something that may hurt and something that may help or please; and those whom all like best largely win their love by this one secret,—uniformly they avoid the hurt and achieve the kindness, either being possible.

For instance, in company — Boys, give at-

tention to those girls who have been sitting unnoticed on the sofa! Do it as a cup-offering of cold water, for no more selfish reason. But then you do not know what grace it will give you in their eyes, and in the eyes of all who enjoy true gentle-manliness. I knew one rare in character and mind and popularity who lingers doubly heroed in the memory of friends. They said of Lowell, "He died in the war, — and he danced with the girls whom the others did not dance with." And, Girls, when you are dissecting the young men in the party's after-talk,— and some leave very little of one who is rather stupid,— stand up for him like an unseen sister, if you know him to be pure and manly. If you belong to the surgeon class of women, that fact probably comes out in your manner to himself, for you are one who is apt to miss the opportunity of giving the cup of water. Did you ever read what happened to get published under the title of "A Nice Girl's Rules," rules made by a certain girl for herself when she went into company? They were fine: "To give away more than I spend on myself. To do all I can for every one at home first, before I go to walk or to parties. At a party to make one forlorn girl happy and introduce her to some pleasant gentleman — and to do this at every party. To draw other people out, without trying to shine myself. As soon as I feel that I am talking or acting in such

a way that I should hesitate from shame to *pray* at that moment, to leave the room."

Again, with the old, the conservative, the fixed, there is constant opportunity to render service by the mere tone of the voice and the deference of the address. Don't they know they are old? Don't they often feel the fact of their conservatism helplessly, and therefore far more painfully than any one with whom it chances to interfere? Don't they suspect overwell that life is on the wane, and that the yellow leaf shows in their talk as they know it is showing in their faces? More than that of any other class, perhaps, *their* appeal to the young, the strong, the capable, is for that courtly delicacy of attention which is shown not in any richness of the cup, but in the way the cup is offered to the lips.

Be a knight, be a lady, of the New Chivalry! Our words mount high — from courtesy to courtliness, from courtliness to chivalry. The essence of chivalry is *to look out for the little ones*. We often talk of it as if it were a reverence due peculiarly to women; but chivalry means far more than reverence of man for woman. It means reverence of strength for weakness wheresoever found. Men often need more of it *from* a woman than they can possibly give *to* her. Chivalry is that in me to which every one whom I have power to injure can appeal in virtue of that fact with the un-



spoken plea: "You *must* use your power to bless."

Wherever a child can be helped, wherever a stranger can be guided, or a friend who is shy be set at ease, wherever a weak brother can be saved from falling and its shame, wherever an old man's step can be made easy, wherever a servant's position can be dignified in his eyes, is the chance for chivalry to show itself. I do not recognize a different feeling in one case from that which moves me in another. The white-haired man, the tired errand boy, the servant-girl with the heavy burden, make the same kind of demand upon me; and all of them make more demand than the lady whose very silk will make people enough look out for *her*. They all challenge my chivalry, that is, my sense, not of generosity, but of *obligation* to help, just because I can give the help, and here is one who needs it. *No-blesse oblige!*

And because we already see the kingdom come in rare souls here and there, we may look forward to the time when chivalry will have in common parlance this broadened meaning; when to the employee in the store, to the poor in the shanty, to the servant in the kitchen, one will feel more honor-bound to be thoughtfully attentive, so far as rights and feelings are concerned, than to any others in his circle of friends.

To be rough to social superiors may show something of the fool, but to be rough to inferiors certainly shows in us something of the savage and the brute. "Whosoever shall give . . . these *little* ones a cup," we read. The littler the one, the more imperious will become the impulse to offer it, the more impossible it will be to be untender. Selfishness will have to be kept for equals, if for any. At present it is usually the other way. The lady often wears her patience with her ribbons in the parlor, and her impatience with her apron in the basement; and at the house door, in the shop, and in the court-room, the poor man is apt to have the fact of poverty stamped onto him by those who to equals are urbane and to superiors right worshipful. And yet it takes so little to make us of humbler station or of humbler powers bless those who are above us! so little to make those poorer than ourselves in any way bless us! Not money, not gifts, but the simple evidence of respect for the station and those in it, of fellow sympathy in their wants and their anxieties, of appreciation of their difficulties,—a pleasant, cheering, equalizing word,—will be a very Jesus-cup of cold water to many a rough-faced man and slovenly dressed woman in the forlorn districts of our city. When happiness can be manufactured so cheaply and sells so high and is always wanted in the market, it seems a pity that

more of us do not set up in the business. Listen to this story from Turgenieff's "Poems in Prose:"—

"I was walking in the street; a beggar stopped me, a frail old man. His tearful eyes, blue lips, rough rags, disgusting sores—O, how horribly poverty had disfigured the unhappy creature! He stretched out to me his red, swollen, filthy hand; he groaned and whimpered for alms. I felt in all my pockets. No purse, watch, nor handkerchief did I find. I had left them all at home. The beggar waited, and his outstretched hand twitched and trembled slightly. Embarrassed and confused, I seized his dirty hand and pressed it: 'Don't be vexed with me, brother! I have nothing with me, brother.' The beggar raised his bloodshot eyes to mine, his blue lips smiled, and he returned the pressure of my chilled fingers. 'Never mind, brother,' he stammered; 'thank you for this; this, too, was a gift, brother.' I felt that I, too, had received a gift from my brother."

Even our dumb animals appeal for *chivalry*. They, too, are *persons*; they are *members* of our household. "Treat a cow as if she were a lady," is the inscription over the barn door of one of our great Wisconsin dairymen. "*My dog*," "*my horse*," I say; but that dog belongs first to himself before he belongs to me: even his body thus, and his soul is all his own.

"Show me a bill of sale from the Almighty!" said the Vermont judge to the slave-hunter claiming his "property." Our creature's due is something behind mercy — justice. It has *rights*. To become the *owner* of an animal is to enter into a contract with a fellow creature, a very "little one;" and at once the golden rule and the laws of ethics begin to apply. And surely the census of these "little ones" will soon include the birds. Millions of them have been slain each year of late simply to deck our sisters' hats. But the mother heart of England and America is at last beginning to remember that every soft breast, every shining wing, worn on a hat *means* that some mother or father heart, a tiny heart but capable of loving and toiling for its brood, has been pierced through just to set the decoration there. And this in the nineteenth century of the Christ love! Will you not join that total abstinence society whose pledge for women is, "No mere *ornament* of mine shall cost a life," whose pledge for men is, "No mere *sport* of mine shall cost a life, no death shall make my holiday"?

And now what shall we say of these cup-offerings in the *home*? — That they are of more importance there for true house furnishing than either money or good taste, or both combined. What *are* they there at home? — Pleasant smiles; gentle tones; cheery greetings;

tempers sweet under a headache or a business care or the children's noise; the ready bubbling-over of thoughtfulness for one another,— and *habits* of smiling, greeting, forbearing, thinking, in these ways. It is these above all else which make one's home "a building of God, an house not made with hands;" these that we *hear* in the song of "Home, sweet home." Into a five-hundred-dollar shanty put strangers who begin to practise the habit of anticipative thoughtfulness for one another, and we have a *home*. Put husband, wife, and the three children into a fifty-thousand-dollar house, and let them avoid this interchange of gentleness, and we have only a family barracks.

Perhaps the best single test of a man lies in the answer to the question, What is he where he is most at home? If there, where he is most familiar and in power, considerateness lessens and tenderness evaporates and talk grows masterful, as if he had more rights than his wife, then the heart is shallow and the character is thin. At home one should be his best, his most graceful, most entertaining, most agreeable — and more so ten years after marriage than ten days after. The same, of course, with the wife. Yet strange to think how many persons save their indifference for this one place that should be all tenderness; how many take pains with their courtesy and geniality abroad, but at home glide into the habit of letting

geniality be taken for granted instead of being granted. That tells in the course of years; for the cold moods, the silent ways, the seeming harmless banterings, are the ways and moods that increase with the years. By and by, when the children are growing up and growing away from us, and we are growing old and should like kind words and looks a little more ourselves, we shall wish for our own sake and for theirs that we had done differently.

Men often think, "They love us, and we know it; we love them, and they know it." Nay, but it is *not* enough to have the love and do the duty *in silence*. We live not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of those we love. Out of the mouth,—it is the *spoken* love that feeds. It is the kindness *offered* that furnishes the house. Even we men who push it coldly away want to have it offered somehow, sometimes, by the wife, the sister, the children; now and then they want it visible. The presence of those children in the rooms is a constant importunity for the outspoken, not the silent, sort of love. Children bare of kisses seem cold as children bare of clothes. We have seen children who evidently did not know how to kiss the fathers,—they went about it, when they had to, so shyly and awkwardly,—and were forgetting how to kiss their mothers.

As for women, it is a woman who writes

(and all who have a mother or a sister know how truly she writes), "Men, you to whom a woman's heart is entrusted, can you heed this simple prayer, 'Love me and *tell me so sometimes*?' " Nathaniel Bowditch, author of the famous "Navigator," added to his fame by formulating this law in the science of married life: "Whenever she came into my presence, I tried to express to her outwardly something of the pleasure that it always gave me." A navigator, that, worth trusting! On the other hand, there are homes whose atmosphere suggests that the man has never told the woman that he loved her — but once, and that then he was exaggerating.

The loneliness of sisters unbrothered of their brothers! The loneliness of wives unhusbanded of their husbands, who go back to the store, the club, the lodge-room, night after night, and scarcely see their children to get acquainted with them save on a Sunday afternoon! Yes, and sometimes the loneliness of men! What half-tragedies in homes we know, our thought falls on at these words! — homes that began as fresh and bright with love as ours, with as rich promise of joy, with as daring a trust that the years would bring new sweetness and carry none away, — now, homes where the sweetness comes like the warm days in November, and the heart numbness stays and grows like the cold. The lonely ones can hardly tell you

why themselves; but you and I perhaps could tell them why. One writes: "I have known a wife who, though she nursed his children, and took care of his household, and sat down with him to three daily meals, was glad to learn her husband's plans and purposes through a third person, to whom he had spoken more freely about the things of deepest concern than he could ever speak to her. The inexpressible pain caused by withheld confidence, the pressure and nightmare of a dumb, repressed life, soon did its work in changing her fresh and buoyant youth to gray-haired, premature age." Have you never seen a death, or at least a wasting sickness, like that which Harriet Hunt called "Found Frozen"?

"She died, as many travelers have died  
O'ertaken on the Alpine road by night,  
Numbed and bewildered by the falling snow,  
Striving, in spite of failing pulse and limbs,  
Which faltered and grew feeble at each step,  
To toil up the icy steep and bear,  
Patient and faithful to the last, the load  
Which in the sunny morn seemed light.

"And yet  
'Twas in the place she called her home she died!  
And they who loved her with the all of love  
Their wintry natures had to give, stood by  
And wept some tears, and wrote above her grave  
Some common record which they thought was true:  
But I, who loved her first and last and best,—

*I knew!*"

Nor is it enough to have *moods* of affectionate expression. That would be like trust-



ing for your water to an intermittent spring; the thirst will come when the water is not there. The *habit* of love-ways is the need. In many a home neuralgia or dyspepsia or the business worry makes the weather within as changeable as it is without in a New England spring: sometimes a morning greeting all around that seems like a chorus to one's prayer, and then a table-talk of sympathy that sends one bravely out to his work, and one cheerily about her house, and the children brightly off to school, each with a sense that the best time in the day will be the time which brings them all once more together — sometimes so, and sometimes a depot-breakfast where no eye meets eye, and you hear yourself eat, and the stillness is broken by dish-joggings and criticisms on what is in the dishes, or what ought to be and isn't, and then a scurry off, like boys from school.

How is it with *ourselves*? Each one had better ask himself the question in the quiet now and then. Are our homes more tender than they were a year ago, or has love grown dimmer in them? Are we closer to one another's hearts, or more wrapped up in silent selves? Do we spring more readily for those who call us by the home names, or do the old sounds make eyes a little colder turn to look? Are the year's best festivals the anniversaries of the home-love,— the meeting day, the engagement day, the marriage day, the birthdays, and the

death-days? It is not bread you chiefly owe your family, father. It is not mended clothes, mother. It is not errands done and lessons learned, children, that makes your part. It is the way in which the part, whatever it be, is done that *makes* the part. The time comes when we would almost give our right hand could we recall some harsh word, some indifferent, cutting manner, some needless, selfish opposition. Happy we, if the one gone out from our home into the unseen home has left us no such ache to bring the bitter tears! "Too late — too late to love him as we might, *and let him know it!*" "Too late to let her know that *we* knew she was sweet!" Among all "might-have-been's" does the wide world hold another one so sad? There is only one way to make that sad thought die, and that is to clear untenderness utterly from heart *and from the manner* toward the others who still make home *home* to us, to redouble thoughtfulness for them, and try to fill up the measure of the missed love there. When at last the tenderness of our bettered service is blossoming evenly, unfailingly, on the root of that old sad memory, perhaps we can feel self-forgiven and at peace.

One question more. Is it *easy*, after all, to offer simple cups of cold water? This analysis makes us feel that unadulterated cold water may be a rarer liquid than we thought; and

that if one offers it to "little ones," offers it habitually, offers it when thirsty himself, and seeks for opportunities to offer it, the *spring* lies not on the surface, but in the depths of character. More than most other signs such cup-offering tells of a nature sweet and sound at center. It is comparatively easy under duty's lead to brace the will and go forward, dreading but unflinching, to some large self-sacrifice; but harder far through sickness as in health, through tire as well as rest, through the anxieties as through the quiet of life, to be sure to lift a mere cup of water to even a brother's lips. If you are sure to do this for *anybody* as for a brother, you are glorious.

So hard sometimes are these small deeds that there are cup-liftings of history and legend that have grown proverbial as types of self-forgetting. You remember the old Bible story about David's three heroes who broke the ranks of the Philistines to bring their thirsty king a cup of water, and what, when he had got the draft, he did with it to honor them and God; and that widow who gave the hungry prophet her last handful of meal — and there was famine in that land. You may have read of the Mohammedan who, living in a city built amid a wide, hot plain, made a wayside booth a few miles out on the highway, and daily went to fill a vase of water there for fainting travelers as they approached — and once it saved a life.

And of Sir Philip Sidney all have heard,—how he, the wounded general, paused on the moment with hand half lifted to his lips and gave his draft away to the private, wounded worse — the “little one.” Brother-souls to Sir Philip were that soldier in our own war who, burning with thirst from a wound in the mouth, refused to touch the canteen lest the blood from his torn lips should spoil the water for the wounded comrades lying near; and that French soldier who begged the surgeon to keep his ether bottle for men hurt worse than he, and stifled his own groan with his bloody handkerchief. Are such acts rare? — No doubt: yet think not that they happen by the ones and twos. Probably no battle-field but in its red dew blossom these acts of brotherhood — of angelhood.

But when such things happen on any of the battle-fields of life, believe not, either, that the deeds *begin* upon those battle-fields, that they are the first heroism of their doers. Only souls wonted to sweetness and self-forgetting brim over with it at such hours. The little thing that makes a moment great is never all done *at* the moment. True,— and what a prophecy it is for human nature! — true, an average man, in health, will sometimes on an instant rise to the death-height of self-forgetting; for a stranger's sake he leaps into the sea to save, he leaps before the rushing engine. But *in*

*his agony* does a man reach even the *cup's* height for another, unless the years behind have made him ready for his instant? Such little acts as Sidney's and our soldier's, therefore, live as the ideals of service, and set the standard of cup-bearing. They set the standard where Jesus would have set it; where he *did* set it when in his own agony he prayed, "Father, . . . let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." They uplift us to the understanding of his thought that whoso does these things to "little ones" does them unto God.

And then the great thought comes full circle: we see that we can do a deed *to* God only by doing that deed *for* him,—only by offering ours as the hands with which it shall be done. Our human love for one another, and all our human help, are not less his for being ours. "God's tender mercy" is the name in heaven for what we call on earth "a drink of water." Many dear things of providence he hands to his little ones *by each other*. Sometimes, how can he reach them else? And sometimes, whom can he use but you and me?

## THE HERMIT OF THE THEBAID

---

O strong, upwelling prayers of faith,  
From inmost founts of life ye start,—  
The spirit's pulse, the vital breath  
Of soul and heart !

From pastoral toil, from traffic's din,  
Alone, in crowds, at home, abroad,  
Unheard of man, ye enter in  
The ear of God.

Ye brook no forced and measured tasks,  
Nor weary rote, nor formal chains;  
The simple heart that freely asks  
In love, obtains.

Alone, the Thebaid hermit leaned  
At noontime o'er the Sacred Word.  
Was it an angel or a fiend  
Whose voice he heard ?

It broke the desert's hush of awe,  
A human utterance, sweet and mild;  
And, looking up, the hermit saw  
A little child,—

A child, with wonder-widened eyes,  
O'erawed and troubled by the sight  
Of hot, red sands, and brazen skies,  
And anchorite.

"What dost thou here, poor man? No shade  
Of cool, green dawns, nor grass, nor well,  
Nor corn, nor vines." The hermit said:  
"With God I dwell.

"Alone with him in this great calm,  
I live not by the outward sense;  
My Nile his love, my sheltering palm  
His providence."

The child gazed round him. "Does God live  
Here only? Where the desert's rim  
Is green with corn, at morn and eve  
We pray to him.

"My brother tills beside the Nile  
His little field; beneath the leaves  
My sisters sit and spin the while  
My mother weaves.

"And when the millet's ripe heads fall,  
And all the bean-field hangs in pod,  
My mother smiles, and says that all  
Are gifts from God.

"And when, to share our evening meal,  
She calls the stranger at the door,  
She says God fills the hands that deal  
Food to the poor."

Adown the hermit's wasted cheeks  
Glistened the flow of human tears;  
"Dear Lord!" he said, "thy angel speaks,  
Thy servant hears."

Within his arms the child he took,  
And thought of home and life with men;  
And all his pilgrim feet forsook  
Returned again:

The palmy shadows cool and long,  
The eyes that smiled through lavish locks,  
Home's cradle-hymn and harvest-song,  
And bleat of flocks.

"O child!" he said, "thou teachest me  
There is no place where God is not;  
That love will make, where'er it be,  
A holy spot."

He rose from off the desert sand,  
And, leaning on his staff of thorn,  
Went, with the young child, hand in hand,  
Like night with morn.

They crossed the desert's burning line,  
And heard the palm-tree's rustling fan,  
The Nile-bird's cry, the low of kine,  
And voice of man.

Unquestioning his childish guide  
He followed as the small hand led  
To where a woman, gentle-eyed,  
Her distaff fed.

She rose, she clasped her truant boy,  
She thanked the stranger with her eyes.  
The hermit gazed in doubt and joy  
And dumb surprise.



And lo ! with sudden warmth and light  
A tender memory filled his frame;  
New-born, the world-lost anchorite  
A man became.

" O sister of El Zara's race,—  
Behold me !— had we not one mother ? "  
She gazed into the stranger's face:  
" Thou art my brother ? "

" O kin of blood ! Thy life of use  
And patient trust is more than mine;  
And wiser than the gray recluse  
This child of thine.

" For, taught of him whom God had sent  
That toil is praise, and love is prayer,  
I come, life's cares and pains content  
With thee to share."

Even as his foot the threshold crossed,  
The hermit's better life began;  
Its holiest saint the Thebaid lost,  
And found a man !

— *Whittier.*













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